(b) if so, the reasons for their strike;

(c) the estimated loss incurred by government due to said strike; and

(d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to resolve their demands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The nation-wide strike was called to protest against the disinvestment of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) amendment of Labour Laws and down-sizing and closure of PSUs. The financial loss suffered due to the strike has not been estimated.

(d) The Chief Labour Commissioner's Office intervened in respect of the strike notices received by them and held conciliation proceedings with a view to avert the strike.However, the strike could not be averted as the unions stuck to their demands.

Plight of beedi workers

5341. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the plight of the beedi workers;

(b) if so, the present status of the beedi workers;

(c) the average wages of beedi workers, both male and female, separately; and

(d) the steps taken for welfare of the beedi workers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (d) The Government is running various welfare schemes in the fields of Health, Housing, Education, Recreation and Social Security for the benefit of beedi workers and their dependants from the Beedi workers Welfare Fund. Apart from this, the Beedi & Cigar workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 has been enacted by the government to provide for the welfare of the workers in beedi and cigar establishments and to regulate the conditions of their work and for matters connected therewith. This Act is being implemented by the State Governments. The State Governments have framed corresponding Rules under this act to enforce

various provisions of the Act. The State Governments are advised from time to time to strictly enforce the provisions of the labour laws. With regard to the average wages of beedi workers, both male and female, the minimum wages vary in different States between Rs. 38.80 and Rs. 132.50 for rolling one thousand beedis as fixed by the State Governments under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Jobs in industrial sector

5342. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Industrial Sector shed more than 7 lakh jobs in two years ending 2000; and

(b) if so, the measures proposed to ensure that industry generates enough jobs for employees in the factory sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) The employment in the organized industrial sector reduced by approximately 2 lakh in the two years ending 2000.

(b) the growth strategy of the Tenth Plan lays emphasis on rapid growth of sectors, which are most likely to create high quality employment opportunities. In order to enable the poor to access the opportunities and to ensure consistency between the requirement and availability of skills, emphasis is being placed on skill development.

Skill Development Fund

5343. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Skill Development Fund has been created to prepare work-force in the wake of industrial restructuring;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, whether there is a proposal to do so and by when;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.